

June, 1968

REPORT TO THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE Y.M.C.A.

Gentlemen, I would first like to express my thanks and those of my teacher representatives to each of you for receiving us. We know you are very busy men but we feel that, as a result of this meeting together, both the school and the "Y" will benefit.

Bancroft School is located on St. Urbain Street near Mount Royal Avenue, not far from Fletchers' Field. When I was first assigned to this school eleven years ago, the population of the area was predominantly Jewish. There was a Home & School Association; there were centres such as the Y.M.H.A., Neighbourhood House (a Jewish Welfare Community Centre) and the Jewish Public Library in the school area. The North Branch "Y" of course, was in the general area at that time but not in the school district. Relations between these organizations and the school were excellent. We all co-operated in the job we were doing. True, our relations with North Branch "Y" were not as close as with the other organizations, because it was further away and outside the school district. However, we gave the same co-operation to the "Y" in any of their projects by distributing the literature re their programmes and encouraging children to participate in their recreational activities-especially those conducted during the summer.

About two years after I became principal of Bancroft School, signs of change in the nature of the area began to show. The predominantly Jewish Population began to move away and their homes became occupied by New Canadians, mainly Greeks. Each year thereafter the exodus of the Jews became greater as did the influx of New Canadians. The executive of the Home & School Association-composed, of course, mainly of parents-struggled to maintain itself but its efforts were in vain and the Association was disbanded, a decision made by the executive. This development was not peculiar to Bancroft School. The same thing happened in other schools of the general area. The Y.M.H.A. disposed of its building, The Jewish Welfare closed Neighbourhood House, and finally the Jewish Public Library was sold. There are now ten Jewish children in the school, as compared with over seven hundred a few years ago. There are now over seven hundred Greek children in the school, which has had a population this year ranging between 900-940. These children are in Grades Kindergarten-V. Children of the Grade VI and VII age group who live in the area are currently accommodated at

Strathearn School and are transported by bus. The area which was formerly referred to as "Little Jerusalem" is now referred to as "Little Athens". The area is still changing-Chinese families are also moving in- there are over 100 Chinese children enrolled in the school. From my point of view, although I am in the same building, it is as though I have worked in two different schools-a school of Jewish pupils who had good command of English, and a school of Greek pupils most of whom on arrival knew no English. We at the school are trying out best to do a difficult job of educating these New Canadians and integrating them into the Canadian way of life.

We have almost daily contacts with parents. For those who have difficulty in understanding English, we arrange for interpreters.

During the month of November, there is a "Meet the Teacher" evening when parents come in large numbers. Guides (senior students) who speak English & Greek or English & Chinese are on hand.

Each year during Education Week in March parents are invited to see the school in action during the school day.

This year, as in the past, we have co-operated with the "Y" whenever approached-we participated in the pupils' Art Contest-distributed literature re the summer French courses and recreational programmes for pupils and directed adults to their adult English Classes for New Canadians.

However, there have been happenings this year in connection with the "Y", International Branch, the school and the community which have proven puzzling.

The first sign of this different aspect of the "Y" in relation to the school was brought to my attention by a parent and some pupils who showed me a letter they had received from the "Y" which read as follows- Document #1. This came to my attention just before the Christmas Holidays.

Mr. Johnston was a teacher on the staff of the school for five years. He left the services of the Protestant School Board of Greater Montreal in June, 1967 to take the position with the "Y" at the International Branch as Director of Education and Adult Programme. This I learned from this copy of a letter- Document #2- I received from Mr. G. Brown, an Officer of the P.S.B.G.M.



I awaited the presentation of the petition referred to in the first letter (Document #1) but nobody put in an appearance.

I should mention that Mrs. Johnston is on the staff of the school. Mr. Johnston and his wife were on staff before they were married. Mr. Johnston called me one morning to inform me that his wife was ill. I questioned him about the letter (Document #1) and he said he had been away and that there had been some mistake. I accepted this explanation so as to avoid further embarrassment.

Some time later Mr. Johnston arranged to see me to outline in a general way the Mile End Project and its objectives. He also added that he was busy addressing groups with a view to obtaining financial assistance.

Well, the next strange development was the receipt of this letter by registered mail - Document #3. This puzzled me. I knew that "Y" workers had been visiting the homes because parents had told me. One parent told me she had refused to sign a letter brought around by a "Y" worker, and another signed because she was in favour of a Home & School organization. I wondered when I received this letter - Document #3 - unsigned by the composers (as stated at the bottom right) whether I should answer. The address of the sender was outside the school district. No parent or "Y" worker had been in to talk to me about organizing a Parents' Organization to be connected with the school.

Soon after receipt of this letter I received notification from the Outside Organization Department of the P.S.B.G.M. that the use of a classroom on the evening of May 29th had been granted to a Mr. Harman of the International "Y". Later, I was told by a parent who attended this meeting, at which were about twelve parents in attendance, that a paper - Document #4 - was distributed by Mr. Harman. In the discussion I understand he was asked if he had ever approached me and he was told that whenever they had school problems they visited the principal. I also understand that Mr. Harman wanted one of the parents to serve as a permanent chairman, but nobody would accept and they advised him to see me.

It was at about this time I decided to call Mr. G. Gray, the Executive Secretary of the International "Y", to ask him if he knew of these happenings and the tactics used, and whether he approved. He said he would check. He called me back and said he was in agreement with what had been done, including the tactics. I told him that if a person or

or persons with whom I had contact had specific complaints about the International "Y" that I would direct these people to the Executive Secretary of the "Y". I would not try to organize a group of parents on the basis of a list of questionable charges as was apparent the "Y" was attempting to do. That I felt if "Y" workers met people with complaints about the school they should direct them or accompany them to the school to speak to me. I, like other school principals, have frequent visits from parents with problems or complaints about various happenings and do my best to solve them.

As a result of this unproductive conversation with Mr. Gray, I called Mr. Hubbard and discussed the situation with him. He agreed to make a report to the Board of Directors at its next meeting. He later agreed to send me a copy of his report which I received on June 13th. I would like to refer to this later.

In the meantime I received a call from Mr. Harman. This was the first contact I had had with him. We arranged to meet at the school on Friday, June 7th. In the interval, prior to his visit, I decided to answer the Bancroft Concerned Parents' letter - Document #5.

At this point no concerned parent of the Bancroft Concerned Parents' Committee had as yet come to talk to me on their behalf. Several parents had contacted me to inquire as to what was going on, quite confused.

On Friday afternoon, June 7th, I met with Mr. Harman. In the course of the conversation he brought up the letter I received from the Bancroft Concerned Parents and I told him that I had mailed a reply and if he wished I'd show him my reply but he declined. I also told him of the confusion caused among parents re the circular that had been distributed by the "Y" workers - Document #6 - re a meeting to be held at the school on Monday evening, June 10th. Parents had come to me with the circular, having the impression that the school had called the meeting. In order to inform all parents that this was not so, I informed him that that very afternoon this circular was being sent home with pupils - Document #7. I also told him that I was willing to co-operate with any truly representative



parents' group. He extended an invitation to attend this meeting as an observer but I declined because I had a prior commitment and stated that even if I were free-in view of the circular I was sending I could not attend.

In any event I feel that a meeting at which school problems are discussed the school principal should be a participant.

On Monday morning, June 10th, I had an unexpected visit from Mr. Reed, another "Y" worker, I had never seen him before. His main purpose in coming was to ask me to co-operate with the Parents' Committee by distributing this circular-Document #8-because, he said, of the fact that the circular I had sent out gave some parents the impression that the meeting the "Y" had announced had been called off. I agreed to co-operate by distributing this circular. He then verbally extended an invitation to my teachers and me to attend the meeting as observers. I pointed out that I had already stated that I could not be there, but would pass on the invitation to the teachers. Before leaving he gave me this unsigned letter-Document #9. I told him in conversation that I was willing to co-operate with any truly representative parents' group.

At noon that day, June 10th, I had a meeting with my staff and gave an outline of the happenings to date and passed on Mr. Reed's invitation to them to attend as observers.

In the meetings I had with Mr. Harman and Mr. Reed towards the end of the discussions I felt their attitude to be quite militant-"You are a servant of the people!" "You will have a Parents' Organization." "I answer to nobody but the people." When I inquired as to who wrote this Bancroft Concerned Parents' Letter-Document #3-I was told that this could not be divulged because of being sworn to secrecy.

The following morning I was told about the meeting by some of my staff. This list of complaints-Document #10-had been distributed-the same list that had been distributed and discussed at Mr. Harman's group meeting on May 29th-Document #4. Many teachers were shocked and disturbed. I called Mr. Hubbard and told him of the list that "Y" workers distributed and that I felt I would like to make a report to the Board of Directors. At the time he said he would put the report he had previously drawn up in the mail.

After discussion and teachers meeting together a number of the staff decided to support me in my intended approach to the Board of Directors. I called Mr. Hubbard to this effect and at his suggestion I agreed to meet a representative group of the Board along with my three teacher representatives. I read to him the letter I had drafted and mailed it that day - copy Document #11.

Because of overcrowding at Bancroft School the P.S.B.G.M. decided to change the school boundaries in order that approximately one hundred pupils may be accommodated next session at Edward VII School, the neighbouring school to the north.

I called a meeting by circular letter, in English and Greek, of the parents of the affected pupils. This meeting was held at the school this past Monday evening, June 17th. Present at this meeting were Miss I. Dombroski, District Superintendent, Mr. J. Ellemo, Principal of Edward VII School and myself. One of the Greek parents, by prior arrangement, served as an interpreter for those Greek parents who did not fully understand English.

Reasons for the boundary change, transportation arrangements, lunch hour provisions, and the reception of pupils at Edward VII School in September were outlined. The assembled parents were also informed that a letter summarizing the essential information would be sent home stapled to the pupils' Report Cards so that all parents, including those unable to be present at this meeting, would be informed.

By coincidence the "Y" in the name of Mr. K. Johnston had also arranged for the use of a classroom for an executive meeting on the same evening, June 17th.

During my meeting with the parents Mr. Harman, "Y" worker, and some of his group asked for and received permission to sit in on the meeting.

I noticed during the evening that many of the parents had been given this form - Document #12 . This, I understand, was distributed by "Y" workers at the entrance door. The following morning I learned that this form had caused confusion in some instances as pupils thought that if their parents filled out the form and indicated "No" they would remain here next year.

In the meantime Mr. J. Perrie, Deputy Director, P.S.B.G.M., received this letter - Document #13 - from the Bancroft Independent Parents' Committee.



This letter - Document #14 - is his reply.

With your permission I would now like to refer to Mr. Hubbard's report to the Board of Directors .....

As you see this report does not include any of the most recent developments.

Finally, gentlemen, I would say that to date this Project has caused confusion, dismay and concern among many parents, pupils and staff of Bancroft School-that the type of approach the "Y" workers have made in this instance is foreign to our recognized methods of doing things-that in its initial stage it is defeating its ultimate purpose of overall co-operation among those who are working for the welfare of the community.

However, in spite of all that has happened to date, we at Bancroft will co-operate with any truly representative, reasonable Parents' Organization just as we co-operate with individual parents in our work from day to day.

I would urge that, if the "Y" is committed to further expansion of this project into other areas of the district to attain the commendable objectives desired, a direct approach be made to the school-not the unsigned letter nor the tactics which cast aspersions on the school and those connected with it. This latter approach is the cause of grave and unnecessary misunderstandings.



E. H. Hall  
Principal  
Bancroft School